

## *The Carpino Investigation Team*

A methamphetamine production and distribution team headed by Aryan Brotherhood member Michael Carpino was identified as being responsible for large quantities of methamphetamine and a substance known as "glass," which is the purest and most potent form of methamphetamine available. Based on the information received on the Carpino organization, it was classified within the U.S. Attorney's Office as an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task

Force or "OCDETF" investigation, a designation reserved for the most significant investigations. Following a series of undercover purchases from low level operatives of the Carpino Organization, it was determined the most practicable method of furthering the investigation was through wire interceptions. A federal court order was obtained authorizing wire interceptions over four telephone lines. The efforts required to monitor and analyze the intercepted conversations was incredible. More than 500 conversations were intercepted in one month alone. As a result of the intelligence generated by the wiretaps, agents were able to intercept methamphetamine shipments on six separate occasions without revealing the existence of the court authorized wiretap.

Using the information gained from the investigation, 19 members of the Carpino organization were indicted by a federal grand jury for their involvement in manufacturing and distributing methamphetamine. Federal search warrants were obtained for 24 residences and one safe deposit box.

On May 1, 1997, the full weight of the Carpino Investigation task force fell on the illicit officers. Officers and agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Phoenix Police Department, Glendale Police Department, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and the Arizona National Guard executed the 25 search warrants without incident or injury. Thirty-five individuals were arrested during the course of the day, and two clandestine labs stocked with chemicals were seized. Some of the distribution and lab locations were within 1,000 feet of schools whose pupils were a target market for the methamphetamine. More than 10 pounds of methamphetamine could have been produced from the chemicals seized that day. Agents seized nearly three pounds of finished product, most of which was "glass," 10 ounces of cocaine, 29 guns, one live hand grenade, 19 vehicles, and four computers.

Court proceedings for the 19 individuals charged in the federal indictment concluded in 1998. As a true measure of the success of the Carpino investigation, the indictments, arrests, and seizures were not the end of the investigation. To date, 43 defendants have been arrested or indicted based on the combined efforts of the investigating agencies. More arrests are expected, as spinoff investigations continue to be productive. None of this would have occurred without the cooperative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Phoenix Police Department, Glendale Police Department, Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, and the Arizona National Guard.